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ABSTRACT

The overall segregationist milieu of the educational enterprise serves to forestall movement in the search of a comprehensive theory of literacy and literacy instruction. Building such a theory mandates a democratically disposed, pluralistic research community. Sociologically, the theory-to-practice norm sustains an artificial hierarchy within the membership of the educational enterprise. In addition, a number of segregated philosophical and methodological camps exist. The search for the generalizable theory and/or practice also stands in the way of the desegregated research community in which all participants inform theory. Such a radical shift in the way in which literacy research is done can be accomplished by having: (1) teachers travel to university settings; (2) researchers travel to school settings; (3) researchers and teachers travel to students' settings; (4) teacher research become either a substitute or complement to traditional staff development initiatives; (5) teacher research given equal opportunity at conferences and in journals; and (6) preservice teacher education explore teacher research infusion models. Teacher research should be a welcome force in the search for increasingly comprehensive and sophisticated theories and methodologies related to literacy and literacy instruction. (Three diagrams are included; 19 references are attached.) (RS)

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TEACHER RESEARCH AND OTHER RESEARCH COMMUNITIES: A CASE FOR DESEGREGATION

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Investigations conducted solely for the personal aggrandisement of the investigators or to "punish" those investigated are indefensible.

--Chief Justice Earl Warren (1957)

Sociologically, a theory-to-pratice stance puts a couple of thousand of us in charge and consigns the bulk of the profession to the status of second class citizens. To maintain a theory-to-practice stand is to keep a certain set of social relationships in place. Researchers may like this. It lets them be leaders. It separates what they do in the name of education from what teachers do. In short, it empowers...Empowerment, however, is a transaction. Teachers are disempowered and are likely to remain so as long as a theory-to-practice stance is maintained.

--Jerome Harste (1987)

TEACHER RESEARCH AND OTHER RESEARCH COMMUNITIES: A CASE FOR DESEGREGATION

Introduction

For many of us, the word *desegregation* may conjure a photo album of images and memories related to *segregation*--of racial riots, of protest marches, of shantytowns, of yellow school busses shuttling students across town. To include such an emotionally encumbered concept in the title of a paper at a conference on reading research seems a cheap ploy. It smacks of sensationalism, much like Rudolph Fleck's title, Why Johnny Can't Read. After all, it seems *utterly* absurd that the pristine, objective, data-driven world of educational research would fall prey to such human emotions as bias, closed-mindedness, and discrimination (sic).

However, the educational enterprise is not a system free of bias, for the simple fact that schooling exists within a culture that sustains segregated social and political institutions. Segregation is alive in our schools on many fronts. Prescribed curricula segregate the content areas. Students learn how to read in groups which are segregated by ability. Outside of programs such as Head Start and Reading Recovery (Clay, 1985), the "academic have-nots" in our schools receive lower quality literacy instruction than their academically endowed counterparts. Teachers complain about a profession characterized by isolation; they are isolated physically, economically, socially, and politically from their peers, from administrators, from central office personnel, and from the superintendent. Interestingly, the closer one gets to face-to-face student interaction in school, the less decision-making power and opportunities for collaboration one possesses in a system driven by one-way accountability and imposed autonomy.

This overall segregationist mileu serves to forestall movement toward the overall goal to which we aspire as a research community: No matter what our individual perspectives, as a collective, we are in search of a comprehensive theory of literacy and literacy instruction. Literacy research requires substantive contributions by students, teachers, administrators, university professors, university graduate students, legislators, business leaders, and parents, to name some of the key players. Building such a

comprehensive theory requires an interdisciplinary stance (cf., Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984) towards what it means to be literate under multiple conditions in multiple contexts. Building a comprehensive theory of literacy and literacy instruction mandates a democratically disposed, pluralistic research community.

The current Teacher Research movement exists to counter this institutional disenfranchisement. Teacher Research is an outgrowth of action research, the roots of which date back to the early 1900's (Olson, 1990). Teachers conduct classroom based inquiry with the primary interest of improving practice. While the goals, methods, and underlying assumptions of this research may vary, a common thread to this research has been to improve the quality of instructional practice (cf., Strickland, 1988; Wann & Foshay, 1954). They may work alone or in collaboration with university professors, administrators, or other teachers. Some disseminate their findings; others do not. Teacher researchers have been known to publish and present their findings at conferences, faculty meetings, or support groups. As a result of conducting their own research, teachers report an enriched sense of professionalism, confidence in instructional decision-making, a new appreciation for theory, heightened appreciation of others' research, more critical perspectives on published research, and a defense against burnout (Goswami & Stillman, 1987; Patterson & Stansell, 1987).

Curiously, the rise of teacher research communities across this country occurs at a time when literacy researchers are waging a philosophical and methodological battle about the validity and generalizability of our conventional approaches to literacy research. Logical positivists, phenomenologists, and critical theorists are rallying their troops for what promises to be a major paradigm shift in educational research.

How will this burgeoning group of teacher researchers find their place in this shifting field? Will they simply join one of the camps or will the reseearch community at-large ignore these classroom-based researchers? Will they develop their own paradigm for "doing research," further segregating themselves from the rest of the field? More importantly, how can teacher research contribute to our collective desire to develop, test, and refine theory?

In this paper, I wish to make a case for desegregation. I will argue that teacher research should be a welcome force in the search for increasingly

comprehensive and sophisticated theories and methodologies related to literacy and literacy instruction (e.g., Harste, 1987). I will begin with a discussion of the false assumptions that stand in the way of a fully desegregated research community. I will close by suggesting key components of a Desgregation Plan.

Sociopolitical Segregation: The Theory-to-Practice Norm

The ingredients for substantive theory building are in place today. If a person from outside the field of literacy research were to peruse any major review article published within the last fifteen years, he or she might draw the conclusion that the literacy research community's theory-to-practice norm seems exceptionally rational, coopeerative, and diverse. This outsider would infer that research is either *basic* or *applied* in nature. Basic research serves to answer theoretical questions like, "What is reading?" and "What is writing?" (cf., Shannon, 1989). Basic research is the foundation for applied research, which is the foundation for instructional change; thus, basic research is prerequisite.

The outsider might also infer that literacy research requires many participants. Students, classroom teachers, university professors, administrators, and university graduate students are recurrent players in these investigations. Everyone has a distinct role. Some initiate the investigation; some generate data; some gather data; some analyze data; and some interpret the data; some consume the findings, conclusions, and implications.

This outsider might also infer that literacy research requires a diverse set of methods. At times, the investigator must immerse himself in a learning environment and discover extant relationships between students, teachers, teaching, materials, learning, and the like. At other times, the investigator will test an hypothesis experimentally, by constructing the learning situation in either a clinic setting or a more controlled classroom setting.

While this does sound eclectic, there is a downside to the theory-to-practice norm, and with few exceptions, we sustain this norm with little introspection. Consider the relationships illustrated in Table 1. Sociologically, the theory-to-practice stance sustains an artificial hierarchy within the membership of the educational enterprise (Harste, 1987). The

vertical axis in Table 1 illustrates this hierarchy. At the top of the dissemination cycle is the university professor/researcher. Professor/researchers attempt to build theories or construct state-of-the-art instructional programs--their professional survival depends upon it. In many cases, professor/researchers maintain a disproportionate share of the responsibility for the genesis, design, analysis, and interpretation phases of the study. Additionally, the research findings are disseminated to those lower in the hierarchy in prestigious and sometimes lucrative forums, such as scholarly or pedagogical journals, conference presentations, or in consulting situations.

This one-way transmission of information results in limited research roles for teachers and students. In a theory-to-practice norm, teachers play the role of subject, participant or consumer. Similarly, students rarely inform new research as curricular informants (Hartse, Woodward, & Burke, 1984); rather, their cooperation in the inquiry is relegated to the role of subject or participant.

With few notable exceptions, teacher research has not been supported by those at the top of the sociopolitical hierarchy (i.e., university professor/researcher). Arthur Applebee (1987), for example, makes a case for keeping teaching and research separate. Though his argument makes sense from his vantage as a professor/researcher, it is still a argument in favor of segregation. He claimed that "researchers alone are imperfect prescribers of classroom practice" and that the "classroom teacher is an imperfect researcher.

University professor/researchers and classroom teachers bring different kinds of professional training and expertise to classroom-based inquiry. The professor/researcher maintains an objective, detached stance, while the teacher is pressed to make immediate instructional decisions. As a result, teachers and researchers serve complementary roles in research situations but conflicting roles in teaching situations. In a cooperative vein, teachers can enrich the research process by providing insights into the complexities of the classroom, asking questions that help define new areas of inquiry, and reflecting upon instances of teaching, interpretations of data, and implications for instruction. "At its best," Applebee writes, "the relationship between research and teaching should be a *symbiotic* one" (Applebee, 1987; p. 716).

Applebee's notion of symbiosis coupled with his vision of the roles teachers and professor/researchers should serve further corroborates the reality of the false hierarchy within our community. Symbiosis comes in three general forms: parasitism, in which the host is always harmed; commensalism, in which an organism obtains crumbs left over from the host's food and is sheltered by the host; and mutualism, in which both parties benefit from the symbiosis (Goldsby, 1979, cited in Patterson & Stansell, 1987). In our present theory-to-practice culture, who is the host and who is the organism?

Surprisingly, there are segregationsit calls from within the teacher research community as well. These voices contend that rather than following in the footsteps of conventional inquiry, the teacher researcher should develop her own theory and methodology more appropriate for naturalistic inquiry (Mohr & MacLean, 1987; Bissex & Bullock, 1987) (see Guba, 1978 for excellent discussion of this dichotomy). Theory and practice should stand in a dialctical relationship (Berthoff, 1987). Additionally, the teacher researcher should consider herself or any interested peer as the primary outlet for the findings.

Philosophical and Methodological Segregation

In addition to the false hierarchy in our community, segregated philosophical and methodological camps exist as well. A number of theorists have attempted to differentiate these insular research communities. While Guba's (1978) description of the conventional versus naturalistic inquirer is helpful, I will draw mainly from Shannon's recent Journal of Reading Behavior article, "Paradigmatic Diversity Within the Reading Research Community" (1989).

Following Popkewitz's (1984) lead, Shannon (1989) sees the reading research community as segregated into three camps: empirical/analytic, symbolic, and critical scientists (Table 2). *Empirical/analytic scientists* (or logical positivists) see parallels between cognitive and social phenomena *and* the physical world. Thus, theory-building within this culture follows the methods of the "hard" sciences. The following philosophical assumptions comprise the empirical/analytic canon: (a) theory is universal and stable; (b) research and researchers are value free; (c) the social world is a summation of factors which can be analyzed, described, and reassembled without harm to

one's interpretation of it; and (d) each variable, factor, or construct within the phenomena of interest has one precise, constant definition.

Methodologically, the emprical/analytic scientist adopts a style of intervention. Since she views the world as a conglomeration of independent, dependent, and extraneous variables, she conducts investigations under controlled clinical conditions (e.g., randomized selection; experimental or statistical control). Mathematical logic and deductive reasoning are the interpretive tools through which precision is achieved.

Symbolic scientists (or phenomenologists) believe, on the other hand, that physical and social phenomena are inherently different. Cognition is context-dependent, situational, socially constructed, and socially maintained. The following general assumptions comprise their canon: (a) theory arises from the observed patterns of the participants when interacting; (b) the context of a literacy event is all-important for it affects participants' intents and behaviors (e.g., participant perceptions; social and intellectual norms); (c) an analysis of the basic processes and instructional practice in the literacy event criss-crosses the event from a number of perspectives; and (d) an investigation's focus is upon naturally occurring events as they happen, thus imposed constraints violate ecological validity.

Methodologically, the symbolic scientist conducts investigations in noncontrived settings, where the conditions are controlled by the participants, and the investigator strives for corroboration of his interpretation through triangulation. The inquiry is characterized by exhaustive data collection and observation. Inductive reasoining is the interpretive tool through which precision is achieved.

Critical science (or critical theory) is an extension of symbolic science to some degree; however, where symbolic scientists enter an investigation with one general focus (e.g., linguistics), critical scientists observe, analyze, and interpret patterns in interaction through multiple, interacting perspectives. Critical scientists believe that "[social] negotiations are not conducted among equals because social, economic, and political circumstances have given certain segments of society license to assert undue influence over the outcomes" (Shannon, 1989; p. 101).

The following general assumptions comprise the critical scientist's canon: (a) the goals of critical research are to interpret phenomena in its historical context, and to identify the implications, present-day contradictions,

and opportunities for constructive change; (b) theory and practice are inseperable; and (c) critical research is value laden, as researchers are advocates of teachers and students.

Methodologically, critical researchers utilize historiography to understand the past and statistical and survey measures to gather information about the current social condition. Naturalistic methods, such as those used by the symbolic scientist, aid the critical researcher in observing participants in various literacy events. The researcher's findings surface as a result of the dialectical relationship between particular literacy events (e.g., reading group discussions) and the larger social structure (e.g., stratified society).

Table 3 illustrates how the sociopolitical hierarchy intersects the philosophical and methodological diversity. Though we lack the empirical basis for an estimate as to how much each participant in the hierarchy contributes to published research reports and related articles, we can nonetheless assume that the bulk of the work is authored by university professor/researchers for reasons related to tenure and promotion.

We do have some evidence, however, as to the distribution of this work across the three philosophical camps. In a recent survey of the top scholarly journals in the reading research, Shannon (1989) found a tendency toward empirical/analytic science (Reading Research Quarterly; Journal of Reading Behavior). This tendency does not invalidate the potential contributions the other camps have to make. In fact, though we lack a systematic study of the journals which serve as a forum for the bulk of our work in literacy research, Shannon (1989) found a tendency to move away from strict empirical/analaytic studies in journals such as the Harvard Educational Review, Language Arts, and Research in the Teaching of English.

Unfortunately, these calls for partial or complete segregation will only serve to stave off what Patterson & Stansell refer to as a "new mutualism" (1987), a view of a symbiotic relationship that describes the potential relationship between teachers, administrators, professor/researcher, students, and teacher researchers: neither group can be productive alone...together, they form a new movement, a different perspective on inquiry into the ways teachers teach and the ways learners learn" (Patterson & Stansell, 1987; p. 720).

Segregation of students, teachers, administrators, and professor/researchers into artifical realms of expertise breeds elitism and disenfranchisement. Even though the philosophical chasm is deep and perhaps unsolvable, findings from one community's inquiry could inform another's evolution. On the other hand, lack of diversity can lead to stagnation (Tuthill & Ashton, 1983), a paucity of theory (Mosenthal, 1985), and gaps within our understanding of literacy due to our ignorance of the relationships between the social and political dimensions of instruction (Soltis, 1984).

Generalizability: In Search of the Holy Grail

One last theme stands in the way of the desegregated research community in which all participants to inform theory: the search for the generalizable theory and/or practice. All researchers hope that "if they gathered data tomorrow, it would reflect approximately, though not exactly, the same trend" they found in their data today (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). The emiprical/analytic scientist assigns probabilities or confidence intervals to her inferences about effects, variables, constructs, and the like. The symbolic scientist verifies the stability of his interpretations through triangulation. The critical scientist follows a similar route as the symbolic scientist, though the perspective open the data is broader.

Given an instructional setting, which approach is more ecologically valid? The empiricist may view findings from symbolic science as including too many nuisance variables; onthe other hand, the symbolic scientist and critical scientist would view the empiricist's work as ignoring too many interactions between critical variables. Guba (1978) suggests that the findings from a non-empirical/analytic studies (i.e., naturalistic inquiry) will generalize more reliabily because "naturally occuring relationships are much more likely to be observed again than those effected under laboratory conditions" (p. 13).

The essential problem comes when we move from theory to practice when that theory has been generated in contrived situations. Glass (cited in Guba, 1978; p. 25) has observed that field experiments provide little opportunity to discover anything useful because they rest on three probably invalid assumptions: that methods are consistent from site to site; that true differences do exist among methods being compared; and that if outcome

measures are valid and reliable, experiments will be definitive. The point is, you can never assume these three conditions to be true under all conditions. To be sure, you often have to invoke more fine grained analyses.

Implicit within a generalization is a model of the circumstances surrounding everyday--and in this case, literacy--phenomena, or that the model represents it (Willems & Raush, 1969). However, the possible array of factors or circumstances that exist outside of that model that may inhibit it or disrupt it are extensive.

Further, Cronbach (1975) believes very strongly that generalizations decay: "at one time a conclusion describes the existing situation well, at a later time, it accounts for rather little variance, and ultimately it is valid only as history" (p. 122). In this vein, an generalization is merely a working hypothesis rather than a conclusion.

Guba (1978) sees the pursuit of generalizable conditions as a Holy Grail, a level of understanding and prediction worth pursuing, yet never attained: "The best pursuit comes not from carefully controlled experiments presumed to yield permanently definitive results, but from very idiographic activity with a full range of local factors taken into account" (p. 29).

The pursuit for a comprehensive theory of literacy and literacy instruction will mandate contributions from all parties in our community.

A Case for Desegregation

Collaborative research efforts inform theory as well as practice (Oakes, Hare, & Sirotnik, 1986; Ross, 1984). Those who invest their energies in isolating phenomena of interest and significance, constructing questions about the phenomena, designing a method for answering the questions, and interpreting and verifying their findings are informing practice and theory simultaneously.

This is why we must move to remove the false hierarchy that supports the theory-to-practice norm. We must move away from efforts that merely invite students and teachers to cooperate in university-initiated research. Burton (1988) makes an argument that too often professor/researchers invite limited participation through cooperation: "The teacher cooperates with the research expert, data is collected, sometimes co-analyzed, and then there is a parting in which the teacher is enlightened and the university person published articles" (Burton, 1988; pp. 767-768). In the context of literacy

research, collaboration implies parity as it relates to roles and responsibilities and to the amount of ownership each participant wishes to have in a project.

How can we accomplish such a radical shift in the way we do research? We could adopt a "bussing" analogy. For example, teachers could travel to university settings. At The Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University (Porter, 1990), professor/researchers and teachers work toward a better understanding of the relationship between research and practice.

Professor/researchers could travel to school settings. The Metcalf Project (Tierney, Tucker, Gallagher, Crismore, & Pearson, 1988) which includes school-based collaboration between teachers, administrators, graduate students, and professor/researchers in Illinois is reminiscent of this kind of effort.

Professor/researchers, teacher researchers, and administrator researchers could travel to students' settings (e.g., homes; neighborhoods; playgrounds). Though we lack models in this regard, Corsaro's (1985) work in peer cultures, McGinley & Madigan's (in press) work with urban students in fostering critical literacy, and Heath's (1983) work in enabling teachers and students as ethnographers may shed some light on how this could be done.

For those who want to do engage in it, teacher research could become either a complement or substitute to traditional staff development initiatives. If we take more of a Vygotskyan view of teacher change and professional development, we would be sensitive to each person's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) as it relates to their views on teaching, learning, language and literacy. This would require more of an individulaized staff development agenda. With the proper balance of diversity of perspective and alloted time, teacher research is an appropriate forum for teacher change.

Parity in the field is critical (Porter, 1990). Teacher research must be given equal opportunity at conferences and in journals--even in those cases where a conference's goal is to generate scholarly proceedings. Separate conferences for teachers and researchers must be re-examined; it may be that such forums solidify stereotypes, such as "Professor/researchers are always too darn theoretical; bring it back down to Earth, Mac," and "All teachers ever want is a cookbook of ideas; make sure you have lots of handouts, free samples, and tote bags."

Lastly, preservice teacher education should explore teacher research infusion models. "Research" has become a four-letter word in teacher education and the practice of insulating entry-level practitioner from the values and techniques related to a range of research endeavors interferes with reflective dispositions. The I-Search process (MacCrorie, 1981) is an excellent entree into the virtues of classroom-based inquiry.

Closing

It's especially significant and haunting, that I am delivering this paper in Atlanta, Georgia. Geographically and historically, the seeds for racial desegregation were planted and found fertile soil here. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech rings as true today for the state in which we find our literacy research community as it was appropriate for the culture Dr. King fought to change in the 1960s. Many of us involved in literacy research who have found teacher research communities to be forums for building sophisticated, extremely dynamic theories of learning and teaching, imagine the day when teachers will be judged not by their role in the educational machine, but by the content of their vision and contributions to a theory of literacy instruction.

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Table 1

Socio-political Hierarchy within the Literacy Research Community

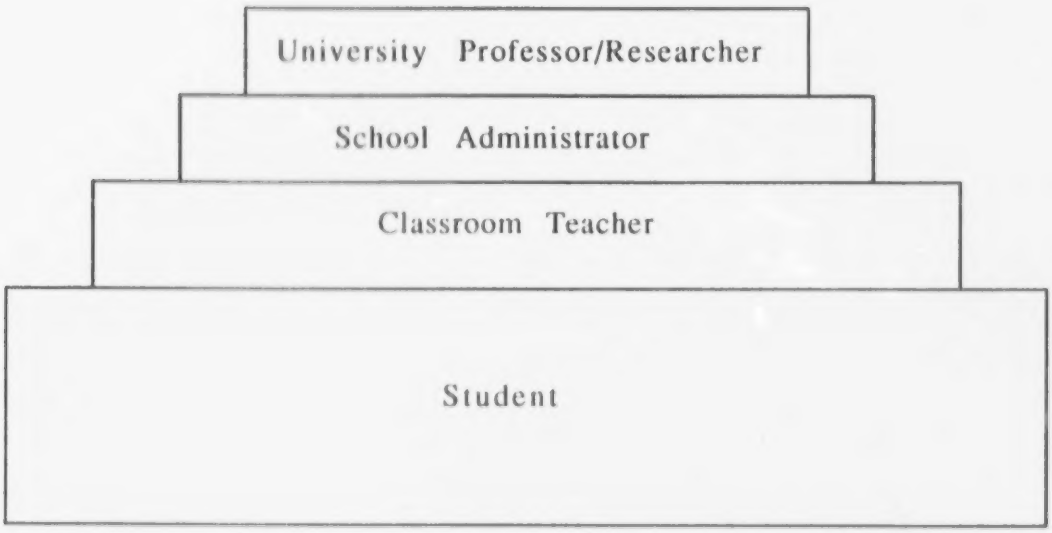

Table 2

Philosophical and Methodological Mileu within the Literacy Research Community (adapted from Shannon, 1989)

Empirical/Analytic Science

*theory is universal

*objective and disinterested stance

*social world is summation of distinct systems

*constructs, factors, variables have stable characterizations

*dependence upon mathematical logical and deductive reasoning

Symbolic Science

*theory arises from observed patterns

*situational context affects participants' intents and behaviors

*analysis leaves literacy event intact for purposes of ecological validity

*definitions of variables and controls cannot be set prior to study

*dependence upon exhaustive data collection, observation, inductive logic

Critical Science

*theory illuminates past and current relations of literacy, document consequences, and identifies contradictions in those relations as opportunities for change

*value laden

*unit of analysis is the dialectic between particular literacy event and the larger social structure

*present social action a result of past social relations and and individual's consciousness

*dependence upon historiography, survey and statistical analyses, and naturalistic methodology

Table 3

Intersection of Hierarchical and Philosophical/Methodological Mileu

	Empirical/Analytic Science	Symbolic Science	Critical Science
University Professor/ Researcher			
School Administrator			
Classroom Teacher			
Student			